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## **CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY CERTIFIES REVISED FINAL PROGRAM EIR FOR BAY AREA TO CENTRAL VALLEY**

SACRAMENTO – Clearing a major hurdle after an intensive public outreach effort, the California High-Speed Rail Authority today certified its Revised Final Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Bay Area to Central Valley portion of the state’s high-speed train system.

The Revised Final Program EIR includes responses to more than 3,700 comments from more than 500 agencies, local governments and members of the public received in the 45-day comment period in March and April, when the Authority circulated the draft revised document to comply with a court judgment. The ruling did not affect the Authority’s continuing project-level work to evaluate the environmental impacts of the San Francisco to San Jose or San Jose to Merced sections of the system.

“Today’s decision marks another major step forward in making California the home of the nation’s first high-speed rail network,” said Authority Chairman Curt Pringle. “Californians want this project done right, and that means a careful and thoughtful assessment of how to minimize environmental impacts while building a project that creates enormous opportunity for the people of our state.”

While the revised report includes a number of revisions, public comments and new responses to those comments, like the 2008 report that preceded it, the newly certified report identified the Pacheco Pass Network Alternative serving San Francisco via San Jose as the preferred option to connect the Bay Area to the Central Valley. The report noted that the Pacheco Pass alternative minimizes the impacts on wetlands, bodies of water and the environment.

As required by the court, the revised report includes a revised description of the project between San Jose and Gilroy that incorporates impacts on surrounding homes and businesses, impacts on the Monterey Highway and impacts on Union Pacific’s use of its right-of way.

The revised report also addresses statements made by Union Pacific regarding the use of its right-of-way for the project and the implications for land use and property impacts in the region, finding that the railroad’s position would not render any of the alternative alignments analyzed in the EIR infeasible.

In March, the Authority circulated a Revised Draft Program EIR to comply with a court judgment challenging the 2008 report. The Authority held two public hearings in the region earlier this year, and also accepted public comment on the revised report at two meetings this week before taking a final vote to certify the report and select a preferred network alternative to connect the Bay Area to the Central Valley.

### **Bakersfield to Palmdale**

The Authority also approved a preliminary Alternatives Analysis for the Bakersfield to Palmdale section of the project. The analysis calls for continued study of three alternatives in the Bakersfield region, two adjacent to the north side of State Route 58 and one along Edison Highway.

The report also identifies four different options for bringing the project out of the Central Valley through the Tehachapi Mountains and two different options for the project as it moves into the Antelope Valley. One alternative calls for running the tracks between the Union Pacific Railroad and Sierra Highway, while the other alternative calls for the tracks to be primarily elevated and to run adjacent to or within Sierra Highway itself.

The alignment alternatives identified in the analysis will be included in the draft project-level Environmental Impact Report for the section.

### **Fresno to Bakersfield**

The Authority also approved a Supplemental Alternatives Analysis for the Fresno to Bakersfield section of the project. The analysis called for revising one alternative for the project in Kings County to minimize agricultural impacts. In addition, the analysis recommended against further study of two alternative alignments that would have placed tracks for the high-speed train through the city of Hanford.

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